



CINCINNATI HISTORIC CONSERVATION REVIEW PROCESS

I. AFFECTED PROPERTIES

If your property is located in a locally designated historic district, your building permit application will automatically be referred to the Historic Conservation Office for review.

II. REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

No additional application form is required. Plans and specifications presented to Buildings & Inspections Department are usually adequate for historic review.

III. CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS

All work that is not routine upkeep or repair in kind requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Upkeep such as repainting and cleaning do not require a COA. The Historic Conservation Board does not review paint color. However, exterior work on 1, 2 or 3 family dwellings that is exempted from permits may require the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness prior to proceeding with the work.

IV. HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES

Each designated historic district has its own set of guidelines, which are used to evaluate your application. These guidelines, which are formulated for the types and styles of buildings in your district, are intended to protect the character of your building and the neighborhood by fostering compatible changes. The guidelines are also flexible to allow consideration of the condition of a particular building.

V. HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

The Historic Conservation Board (HCB) meets on Mondays from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. every two weeks to make decisions on Certificates of Appropriateness for substantial rehabilitation, restoration, new construction and demolition projects.

Made up of nine volunteers appointed by the City Manager, the HCB includes a lawyer, architects, real estate expert, professional preservationist, historian, planner, and community representatives, in order to provide a balanced review of building projects.

VI. PRE-HEARING CONFERENCES

Prior to presentation to the HCB of a permit application, an informal conference is held to provide adjacent property owners, neighborhood groups and other interested parties to become acquainted with the plans and comment on the project. Notices of the pre-hearing conference and the HCB hearing are sent to all abutting property owners. Addresses for these notices are obtained from the Hamilton County Auditor's Office.

VII. URBAN CONSERVATOR

Some types of changes can be approved by the Urban Conservator -- the chief staff to the Historic Conservation Board. These changes include:

- A. Signs, awnings and hardware which meet guidelines
- B. Minor demolition of non-significant parts of buildings
- C. Fences, fire escapes, and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems
- D. Roof repair or replacement
- E. Cornice repair or replacement
- F. Window repair or replacement
- G. Step and wall repair or replacement
- H. Work not requiring a building permit such as landscaping and painting
- I. Rear facade changes which are not visible from the streets and do not change the shape of the roof

The Historic Conservation staff can let you know immediately if your proposed changes must be reviewed by the HCB. If so, the staff will review your plans and put your proposal on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

VIII. REVIEW PERIOD

Minor changes reviewed by the Urban Conservator can be approved in one day, but usually take 3-15 days.

All changes reviewed by the HCB take 15-30 days unless there is an objection from the community or unless the demolition of an important building is proposed.

If there is no objection, but the staff or Board delays and does not act within 30 days, you can go ahead with your project without Board approval, and without penalty to you.

If there is an objection, the Board must hold a public hearing and make a decision within 60 days of the time you file your application.

IX. DEMOLITION

In the case of an important historic building or resource, the HCB may delay a decision on a demolition permit for 180 days in order to provide time to explore alternatives. Demolition of a building determined to be unsafe by the Director of Buildings & Inspections is considered an emergency which is exempt from the historic review process. Demolition by willful action or neglect may be subject to civil action by the city solicitor.

X. APPEALS

Any person, organization, association or city official adversely affected by the HCB may appeal to City Council. Complaints must be filed within ten days of the mailing of the HCB's decision to the applicant.

XI. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Historic Conservation staff can provide technical assistance on aspects of your project, advise on compliance of a project with the historic design guidelines, and give a preliminary indication of how the HCB will respond to a given application. It is helpful to consult with the staff early in the project planning process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information, such as a copy of Cincinnati's Historic Conservation Legislation, contact the Historic Conservation Office, City Planning Department, Centennial Plaza Two, 805 Central Avenue, Suite 720, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202, (513) 352-4890.